



ATLANTIC FLYWAY COUNCIL

Ontario	Québec	Nanavut	New Brunswick	Newfoundland	Nova Scotia	Prince Edward Island
Maine	New Hampshire	Vermont	Massachusetts	Rhode Island	Connecticut	New York
Pennsylvania	New Jersey	Delaware	Maryland	Virginia	West Virginia	North Carolina
South Carolina	Georgia	Florida	Puerto Rico	Virgin Islands		

MEMORANDUM

To: Atlantic Flyway Council Representatives
Atlantic Flyway Technical Section Representatives

From: Ron Regan and Bill Crenshaw, AFC Consultants

Date: June 28, 2005

Subject: Service Regulations Committee Meeting on June 22 - 23, 2005

The Service Regulations Committee (SRC) met on June 22 and 23, 2005 regarding migratory game bird issues for the upcoming regulations cycle. Committee members present were Paul Schmidt (Chair), Marvin Moriarty (Region 5), Rowan Gould (Region 7), and Robyn Thorson (Region 3). Ralph Morganweck (Region 6) was unable to attend the meeting. Flyway Consultants present were Ryan Broddrick and Don Childress for Terry Crawforth (Pacific Flyway), George Vandel and Randy Kreil (Central Flyway), David Hayden and Tom Hauge (Mississippi Flyway), and Ron Regan and Bill Crenshaw (Atlantic Flyway). Brian Millsap represented the Service's Division of Migratory Bird Management staff to the SRC. Jerry Serie was in attendance in support of our participation. Past AFC Chairman, Bob Ellis (VA), also attended the meeting.

Miscellaneous – Brian Millsap reviewed the agenda. Transcripts of the meeting will be available at a later date. The primary purpose of this meeting is to deal with early season regulations. Late season issues, including zones and split guidelines and framework changes will be discussed in detail at the July meeting.

Habitat Conditions – Khristi Wilkins reported on the 2005 waterfowl breeding conditions. Prairie Pothole conditions have been very dry in the Dakotas but improve in southwest Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Parklands in Saskatchewan, Alberta and parts of Manitoba are much improved over 2004. Eastern Manitoba parklands have received too much precipitation and are rated as poor. Northern Manitoba and Saskatchewan have also experienced large amounts of rain and are fair. Nesting conditions in the Northwest Territories and Alaska are generally good, except for the North Slope, which has experienced flooding. Habitat conditions in the east are rated as good except coastal Maine and Nova Scotia where flooding has also occurred. Bob Trost also added the

recent rains in the parklands and southern Saskatchewan and Alberta should provide excellent brood rearing conditions.

Teal -- Brian Millsap stated that, while blue-winged teal numbers will not be available for a week or so, it was felt that there should be enough teal to allow for at least a 9-day teal seasons in the Mississippi and Central flyways. A total breeding population of 3.3 million teal are needed for a 9-day season and 4.7 million are needed for a 16-day season. Mark Koneff stated that the teal data should be ready next week (June 27-July 1).

Connecticut September Goose Season Extension – The SRC approved the Atlantic Flyway Council’s recommendation to make Connecticut’s experimental September goose season (September 30th closing) operational.

Pintail Harvest Regulations – Ryan Broddrick (CA) reviewed the Pacific Flyway Council’s recommendation that pintail regulations for 2005 follow the current model. This would give the Pintail Working Group, flyway councils and Service time to review the most recent draft report *Population Dynamics and Harvest Management of the Continental Pintail Populations – June 2005* by Scott Boomer and Mike Runge. The SRC agreed with the PF recommendation. The Service wants the Pintail Working Group and the four flyways to establish clear harvest objectives for pintail and adopt an adaptive process, similar to what currently exists for the mallard model, prior to the beginning of the next regulatory cycle (March, 2006). While this process is taking place, the SRC will not be supportive of flyway efforts to stratify pintail harvests. Fred Johnson stated that the AHM Working Group would assist the Pintail Working Group to develop clear pintail objectives at a meeting this fall in Washington State.

Eastern Mallard Model – Ron Regan requested that the Service clearly identify what assessments are needed by the Service to enable the eastern mallard model to become fully operational. Brian Millsap indicated that the MBMO would do their best to put something together before the Atlantic Flyway’s summer meeting.

Resident Canada Goose EIS – Paul Schmidt stated the Resident Canada Goose EIS has undergone a lot of review and is still in the Department of Interior Solicitor’s Office. He felt that the final report would be coming out within weeks.

Captive-reared Mallard Report – This report is still in the Solicitor’s Office. No indication of when it will be released.

Light Goose EIS – This report is also still sitting in the Solicitor’s Office.

Zones and Splits Guidelines – This issue will be handled at the July SRC meeting. George Vandel (SD) stated that the Central Flyway made a “no-change” recommendation; however, they are reconsidering this position and may change their recommendation at the summer meeting.

AHM Task Force Recommendations – This item will also be discussed at the July meeting. During a meeting of the National Flyway Council, Don Childress indicated he would put together a timeline of decision points and questions for discussion for consideration at upcoming Flyway Council meetings.

Hunter's Choice Experiment – Randy Kreil (ND) presented the Service with a proposed package for the Central Flyway's Hunter Choice Experiment. This draft has also been distributed to the other flyways. George Vandel (SD) reminded the Service that the CF would have a season-within-a-season (SWS) in 2005, regardless of what the framework allows, to provide baseline data. The experiment is scheduled to begin in 2006 and continue for three years. The Hunter's Choice experiment will be discussed further at the January 2006 SRC meeting. Paul Schmidt noted that any changes in the framework packages, such as those recommended by the AHM Task Force (Recommendation B), could have a negative impact on the Hunter's Choice experiment.

North American Waterfowl Management Plan/AHM Joint Task Force – The purpose of Joint Task Force (JTF) is to develop options and recommendations for clarifying NAWMP populations objectives and their use in harvest management. A briefing paper was prepared. The JTF will meet several times and produce an initial report of their findings in November. This report will be discussed by the AHM Working Group in December and by the newly formed NAWMP Assessment Steering Committee in January. It will then go through a thorough stakeholder review. A final JTF meeting will be held sometime in the 3rd quarter of 2006 to reconcile issues of the final report.

Alaska Canvasback Season – The Pacific Flyway Council recommended that Alaska be exempt from occasional one-year canvasback season closures. Alaska has only harvested an average of 300 canvasbacks annually since the 1960's. Since Alaska seasons are set during the early regulatory cycle, late season closure puts Alaska in an emergency situation. In the event of a significant long-term decline in canvasback breeding populations resulting in multiple year closures, the canvasback season in Alaska would be closed. The SRC supports the PF recommendation, but wants the PF to better define the criteria for closing the canvasback season in Alaska.

Mourning Doves – Dave Dolton (USFWS) stated that the 2005 Mourning Dove Population Status Report is available on line. Hard copies will not be mailed out this year. The Upper and Lower Mississippi Flyway Regulations Committees recommended changes in zoning criteria. The SRC deferred this recommendation and will address them at the March meeting. Texas requested an expansion of their special white-winged dove season boundary and an increase in number of mourning doves allowed in the aggregate bag from 2 to 4/day. The SRC concurred with this recommendation on the condition that Texas initiate studies to document the additional mourning dove harvest resulting from these changes.

Mississippi Flyway Regular Canada Goose Season – The MF Council recommended that the framework opening date for the regular goose season be changed to September 16. This has been a long-standing request by the states of Michigan and Wisconsin to

help increase the harvest of resident Canada geese. Currently, MI and WI have experimental seasons that open on September 16. The SRC recommended continuing the current experimental status for MI and WI, but did not approve making these seasons operational or changing the framework date for the flyway. Paul Schmidt stated that this change would create both administrative and legal problems because it would force the establishment of goose seasons without the availability of current production data.

Sandhill Cranes – A status report on the population and harvest of Mid-continent (MCP) and Rocky Mountain (RMP) sandhill crane populations is available on line. Both populations appear to be in good shape. The MCP (600,000) is the largest crane population in the world. The RMP numbers 18,000. About 40,000 MCP and 900 RMP cranes are harvested annually. The SRC agreed with the CF recommendation of continuing with the current management plans and harvest goals. Last year two whooping cranes were shot by hunters in Kansas. The Service is working with KS to develop an increased outreach program and to address the illegal take of whooping cranes.

Pacific Flyway Generic Swan Season – The generic swan season in the Pacific Flyway, to allow for the occasional take of trumpeter swans, was challenged by a lawsuit, brought against the USFWS, by the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) and the Fund for the Animals (FFA) has been appealed and is now in the briefing stage. While the main impact of this lawsuit would be on the Pacific Flyway, other flyways with tundra swan seasons might also be affected.

Migratory Bird Treaty Reform Act - The HSUS/FFA (now same organization) filed a motion for an injunction. The motion, which was heard by Judge Sullivan, the same federal judge that ruled in a previous case that resulted in an injunction, was denied last week. Judge Sullivan indicated that Congress made their intention clear with regard to exotic bird species not being protected by the MBTA. In addition, it appears the judge did not believe the plaintiffs would prevail on the merits.

C: Jerry Serie